

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

DUXBURY CLIPPER

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Duxbury's Tree of Knowledge Has Long Been A Landmark

The old mail route between Plymouth and Boston ran through Tarklin. Here a kiln was once built to supply tar needed to caulk vessels in days when many shipyards were operating along Duxbury's shore. Mail was first carried by mounted runners, later by stagecoaches. One of the stops was at the four corners in Tarklin. Here on a large oak, was nailed a box into which the stage-driver deposited mail for this section.

In early colonial days residents of the area also left letters and parcels at this "Tree of Knowledge," which was at the junction of the Massachusetts Bay Path (now Route 8) and the highway crossing Tinkertown. The Bay Path was the westerly route of the two King's Highways laid out shortly after the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies united. It connected Boston with Plymouth, cutting through Dorchester, Quincy, Weymouth Landing, West Scituate, Haver, Pembroke, and West Duxbury. The easterly route, known as the Old Coast Road, ran from Boston through Milton, Quincy, Weymouth, Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Marshfield, Duxbury, Kingston and Plymouth. The Duxbury road and the one through Tinkertown were laid out in 1768.

On May 12, 1775, the first Post Office was established at Plymouth by the Provincial Congress, with William Watson as Postmaster. Mounted mail carriers were making regular trips by June, and it was at this time

that the oak is believed to have acquired the name "Tree of Knowledge." The mail box nailed on it was known for miles around.

First Riders

The first official joint post riders were Timothy Goodwin and Joseph Howland. In 1796 stagecoaches took over the assignment, making tri-weekly trips at first between Boston and Plymouth. Previously mail had been carried

by sailing packets, and beginning in 1845, it was carried by rail when a line began to operate between Boston and Plymouth.

According to one legend, the "Tree of Knowledge" was felled by lightning. According to another, the townspeople were negligent about taking care of it properly until an old man in Tarklin told residents of a nightmare he had had in which the spirit of the tree appeared and scolded the town for failing to pay due respect to the passing of the famous tree. The spirit, he said, threatened plague and